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SUBJECT: IRAN: GERMAN MFA UPDATES ON EU MEASURES, LARIJANI,
AND INTERNAL IRANIAN SITUATION

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Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Jeffrey Rathke for reasons
1.4(b)/(d)

11. (S/NF) SUMMARY: During a December 20 meeting with Iranwatcher, MFA Senior Iran Desk Officer Deike Potzel discussed a range of Iran-related issues. In addition to comments on the current status of the P5 1 and EU additional measure processes, she underscored the return of former nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani to the Iranian political scene, noting that FM Steinmeier had recently told Larijani that the Iranians should make a courageous move following the U.S.'s decision to release the NIE. She and a visiting German Embassy Tehran diplomat also commented on the internal Iranian political scene, noting that the Iranian elite is still struggling with how to interpret the NIE. Political parties are currently selecting Majles candidates with the best chance for success in both Guardian Council vetting and the election itself. END SUMMARY.

12. (S/NF) UPDATES ON DRAFT RESOLUTION, EU MEASURES: Iranwatcher met with MFA Senior Iran Desk Officer Deike Potzel (STRICTLY PROTECT) on December 20. Noting the P5 1 Political Directors telephone conference scheduled for later in the day, Potzel noted that the Germans agreed with the general elements of the draft UNSCR but that a number of the proposed listings still needed to be discussed. She added that, like the U.S., Germany would have preferred that the UNSCR would have been brought to the UNSC in December. She also noted that, following the European Council's December 14 meeting, there has not been any further EU experts-level discussion of EU additional measures; the list is ready but could be changed after the passage of the next UNSC. Given that the next GAERC will take place in late January, there is ample time for further discussion if required.

13. (S/NF) LARIJANI RETURNS TO POLITICAL STAGE, RECENT TELCON WITH STEINMEIER ON NIE: Commenting on the Iranian internal political scene, Potzel noted that former lead nuclear negotiator and Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's personal representative to the Iranian Supreme National Security Council Ali Larijani has returned to the political stage, making frequent press appearances. She also noted that in a recent telcon, FM Steinmeier told Larijani that the release of the NIE was a "courageous" move by the U.S. and that the Iranians should think about making a similarly courageous move. Potzel demurred when asked for more information from the telcon. (COMMENT: Steinmeier commented earlier this

week in a newspaper interview that he saw a great willingness on the U.S. side to creatively use time gained by the NIE but had not seen the required readiness on the Iranian side. This, combined with news of Larijani-Steinmeier discussion, raises whether the Germans are trying to reach out to Iranian power circles (including Khamenei) beyond channels controlled by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. END COMMENT)

14. (S/NF) REOPENING OF IRANIAN CONGEN MUNICH, PRESS COVERAGE OF JULY PNG CASE: When asked about Iranian plans to reopen their Consulate General in Munich, she noted that the incoming Consul General had arrived in Germany and was in the process of receiving his accreditation. The Iranians have yet to share the Consulate General's opening date. Potzel noted her surprise that the German government's Summer 2007 decision to declare an Iranian diplomat persona non grata is only now receiving press coverage. She added that the MFA had received signals that the Iranian government may "take revenge" for the deportation.

15. (S/NF) COMMENTS ON INTERNAL REACTION TO NIE, IRANIAN SITUATION: Potzel was joined briefly at the meeting by Alexander Jung (strictly protect), German Embassy Tehran's First Secretary responsible for internal politics and press. On the NIE release, he noted that Iranian decisionmakers had taken a day and a half to develop a response to the report's publication. Many Iranian elites still do not know how to interpret it, he said. In a bizarre twist, he added that some traditional conservative elites believe that the NIE is in fact a trick by the U.S. and that the U.S. will now focus international attention on the findings of the existence of a nuclear weapons program before 2003.

16. (S/NF) In the run-up to the March 2008 Majles elections, Jung said that political parties are currently focusing on choosing the right candidates who have both the political

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credentials to pass the Guardian Council's vetting process and the name recognition to succeed as candidates. Former cabinet ministers, particularly from the Khatami era, are especially attractive. As to former President Khatami's announcement of the formation of coalition of reformist and conservative parties, Potzel expressed concern that the selection of former nuclear negotiator Hassan Rohani as a lead coalition candidate may backfire, given his lack of internal political name recognition. She also expressed consternation that Mehdi Karroubi had not formally joined the coalition, despite earlier reports that he was an active participant in its creation. Jung added that he had heard reports that both Shargh and Kargozaran newspapers would be reopened shortly and before the election. Staff members from the closed Ham Mihan newspaper are expected to join the Kargozaran staff, he added.

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